



“YOU ARE WORTH THE TIME AND EFFORT NEEDED TO GIVE YOURSELF THE TOOLS TO LIVE A HAPPY AND FULFILLING LIFE!” -DEB SMITH

THE OXYGEN MASK: YOU FIRST A TWO PART SERIES

PART ONE

PUT YOUR OXYGEN MASK ON FIRST!

Anyone who has ever been on a plane and actually listened to the attendant's instructions can tell you that if you struggle to help someone else before you help yourself, you risk being put on the lost souls list. This advice should have been handed out in nursery school- *our first lesson in life.*

Instead, most of us learned this one the hard way- through physical, emotional and spiritual depletion. That feeling of depletion often leads us to the therapist's office-empty and tired yet with a strong desire to heal, to find peace in our relationships and to find new relationships that are healthy, bringing us happiness and contentment.

This digital E-Series is designed to help you on your journey to healing and reaching these goals. Although not a substitute for life coaching, **THE OXYGEN MASK: YOU FIRST**, will set the wheels in motion gently guiding you towards a more fulfilled life.



So let's get started!

If you had made a life coaching appointment, the very first thing we would do is get some information

which would include what is was specifically that brought you into coaching. I would proceed to tell you before we can even look at that issue we need to get you stronger and more confident, so you will be able to meet the needs of the issue head on.

The only time there is a deviation from this process is when any form of violence, risk of violence, addiction or suicidal thoughts are involved. Those issues take precedence and require immediate attention by a psychotherapist or medical doctor. That is not to say that you have never been in an abusive situation, have never had addiction issues, or have never had thoughts of suicide. It is to say these issues are not what have brought you here today.

Here we go!

FIRST ... LET'S LOOK AT YOUR DIET!



What are you eating?

What are you drinking?

How much? And how often?

Do we take the time to think about the impact of all those additives in what we consume?

Do we think about where the food was grown; where it was processed; how it is enhanced; how it is preserved; what is the time frame from farm to table?

So many of us go to the grocery store falling prey to advertisers and convenience. We buy what is in our line of vision rarely veering up or down; it is simply not inviting and takes extra effort.

What do you think your pantry would look like if you discarded all products with additives – food coloring, preservatives, extenders, artificial ingredients?

For most, it would be empty!

Your body and your brain cannot function optimally without proper nutrients. There are a host of studies and theories on this topic ranging from severely restrictive diets to diets dismissing the connection between food and emotional well-being all together. Yet, I have observed when we limit convenience foods and additive laden foods we simply feel better. We have more energy, feel lighter and think more clearly.

RECOMMENDATION: *Look at what you are eating, look in your pantry.*

Are you eating fresh fruits, fresh vegetables, lean meats, whole grains?

Are you eating 3 to 5 times a day?

Or are you skipping meals, eating one large meal instead?

This can trick your body into thinking food is scarce, slowing down digestion, metabolism etc... making you feel sluggish and foggy, as the body conserves energy in a survival attempt.

What are you drinking - coffee, soda, sugary drinks, alcohol? Again, I have observed people who drink these types of drinks are on a

continuous roller coaster ride all day and sometimes into the night. They get the rush followed by the crash, consuming more to start the ride all over again. The main purpose of drinking is to hydrate, so why not hydrate with what the body really needs – **WATER!** And plenty of it. This is not to say you can never have the sugary drinks or that aromatic cup of coffee again, it simply means in moderation.

RECOMMENDATION: *I would ask you to take a look at your eating habits and make healthy changes over time – never in an abrupt shift. **Your body will go into shock!** So if you are drinking 6 glasses of soda a day, reduce to 5 glasses. Then a week or so later reduce to 4 and so on. I recommend replacing foods as they are used with healthier choices – this gentle process will give your body time to adjust, time to make a slow and healthy shift.*

There are some nutrients that are difficult to obtain and to fulfill the body's requirement with foods alone. Two that seem to be a typical problem are the requirements of the gut – probiotics and of the brain – omega oils. My clients seem to feel better, think more clearly and have fewer “down” days when these two nutrients are added to their diets. Of course, I encourage everyone to seek the advice of a nutritional practitioner before making any drastic changes to their diets or before starting any new supplements. They can be helpful in addressing other issues and making other suggestions that would be more individualized and out of my scope of practice. So, be sure to find someone to help you with these changes – it could even be the vitamin guru at your local health food store! They are generally very knowledgeable and very eager to help.

ARE YOU GETTING ENOUGH EXERCISE?



Once we have taken a look at your diet, I next look at your level of exercise (or lack thereof!) Regardless of your physical condition, there is some form of exercise available to you.

If you have any limitations, restrictions or health concerns, definitely consult with a physician or exercise specialist before starting any new routine. But for most of us, getting out 4 to 5 times a week for a long, brisk walk or bike ride is not an issue. **We just don't.** Instead we make every excuse why we can't – it's been rainy lately, it's been too cold, it's been too hot, it's too dark by the time I get home, I have too many commitments on the weekend, I don't have the energy ... the list goes on and on.

The fact is, our bodies were designed to move! I'm not talking about running marathons; I'm talking about moving. When we *don't* move we feel sluggish, lack energy, lack motivation, lack creativity. When we *do* move we tend to feel energized, motivated and creative! So barring any limitations, **move!** And if it's raining, too cold, too hot or too dark – get a walking tape and move in the living room. Trust me on this one – you will notice a difference.

ARE YOU GETTING ENOUGH SLEEP?



Not necessarily in this order, the next topic we would cover on your first session would be sleep.

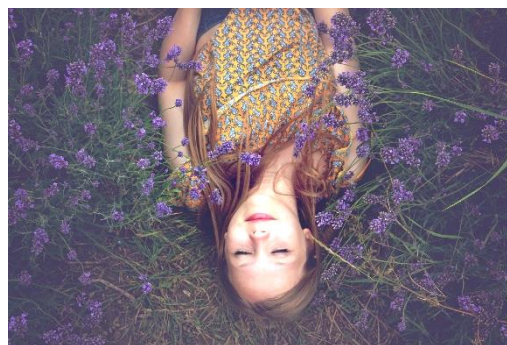
Do you have a sleep routine?

Do you have trouble falling asleep?

Do you have trouble staying asleep?

Do you have trouble getting up?

It is important to have a general bedtime – preferable between 10 and 11 pm. This is the time your body naturally starts to prepare for



sleep. Set a bedtime routine, so your body gets the message we are going to bed now! It could be cleaning up, turning off lights, taking a shower, etc... a pattern your body gets used to in preparation for sleep.

If you have trouble falling asleep you might want to try limiting your computer, phone, electronic readers and/or TV usage an hour before bed, as there are studies which show that it can interrupt melatonin production which interrupts sleep. Quiet and darken your environment, use soothing aromas like lavender, place night oxygen producing plants in your room, try white noise or soothing sounds like rain, the ocean etc... **Create an environment conducive to sleep.**

If you have the constant mental to do list replaying, keep a notepad and pen by your bedside to jot these reminders down. Getting them on paper often eliminates the need to keep replaying them.

If you have trouble staying asleep it could be blood sugar so try eating stabilizing foods like oatmeal just before bed. It could be stress related which could mean your cortisol is on the rise! Relaxation techniques could be helpful for example yoga, meditation and/or breath work.

A very easy breath technique is **belly breathing**. To do this, lay on your back and place a very light object on your belly. As you inhale push that object up with your belly filling it with air. As you exhale let that object drop into your belly, calmly releasing all the air.

Nice gentle breaths – slow and easy.

If you have trouble getting up it could be an indicator that you aren't sleeping well at night. People with sleep apnea often feel this way in the morning. **This condition definitely requires medical attention!**

If sleep remains a problem I suggest a visit to that vitamin guru you made friends with for your supplements at the local health food store! There are many supplements that help calm the body and the mind to help you achieve a relaxed state to both fall asleep and stay asleep. If the problem persists, I suggest a full medical work up as there could be an underlying issue or need for a stronger sleep aid.

ARE YOU SOCIAL?



What do you do for fun?

Do you have a strong social circle?

Do you have a good relationship with family and friends?

Do you keep yourself pretty much isolated?

Does fear or anxiety hold you back from doing the things you want to do?

We are pack animals, which means we find comfort, safety and security in groups – family groups, friend groups, religious groups, hobby groups – **any group**. It really doesn't matter as long as we are connected somewhere in life. If we aren't then it's time to look at why not? We are all anxious at one time or another in our lives – it's normal to have that experience. We all feel inferior at times, shy at times or just plain lacking. Again I say – trust me on this one – everyone feels this way at one time or another!

Sometimes we need a little encouragement, a little support. Sometimes it has to come from ourselves because there truly is no one to give it to us. It is a leap of faith. When the pain of feeling our uncomfortable feelings, the risk of failure is shadowed by the overwhelming pain of isolation we are ready to make a shift!

One of the easiest ways to find a group is to volunteer or follow your passion. If you are passionate about clean beaches, clean water and air then join a conservation group. If you love photography then join a photography group. **Get the idea?** You will connect with like-minded people, have a shared interest. It's a great start!

WHAT IS YOUR PASSION?



And finally, this idea of finding a passion is a vitally important. It is the first step in exploring and

discovering what would make your life more

fulfilled. So take some time to think about an interest. It could be a sport – like golf or horseback riding. It could be wood working, exploring area lighthouses – something that gives pleasure and joy.

This will be our stepping stone to fulfilling your needs and finding true fulfillment and happiness.

So there you have it – the blueprint to my first life coaching session! Once you start working on these key points you will be ready to start looking at what it was that started you on this journey in the first place. Typically relationship issues are at the top of the list. But if we can't heal the relationship we have with ourselves first, then we will never be able to heal our relationships without damaging costs to ourselves.

Please take 1-2 weeks to make the self-care shifts you just read about before you start Part Two. Healing is a process- take your time. Be gentle and loving with yourself.

You are worth the time and effort needed to give yourself the tools to live a happy and fulfilling life!

Love and Laughter,

Deb